The Pantomime of Existence

Nibbana Sermon 09

Life is a "dumb show"—a pantomime where actors mimic the presence of objects that do not exist.

We explore the insubstantiality of the drama we enact daily. We play roles, create props out of thin air, and mistake the performance for reality.

The goal of the meditator is not to improve the performance, but to recognize the stage is empty.

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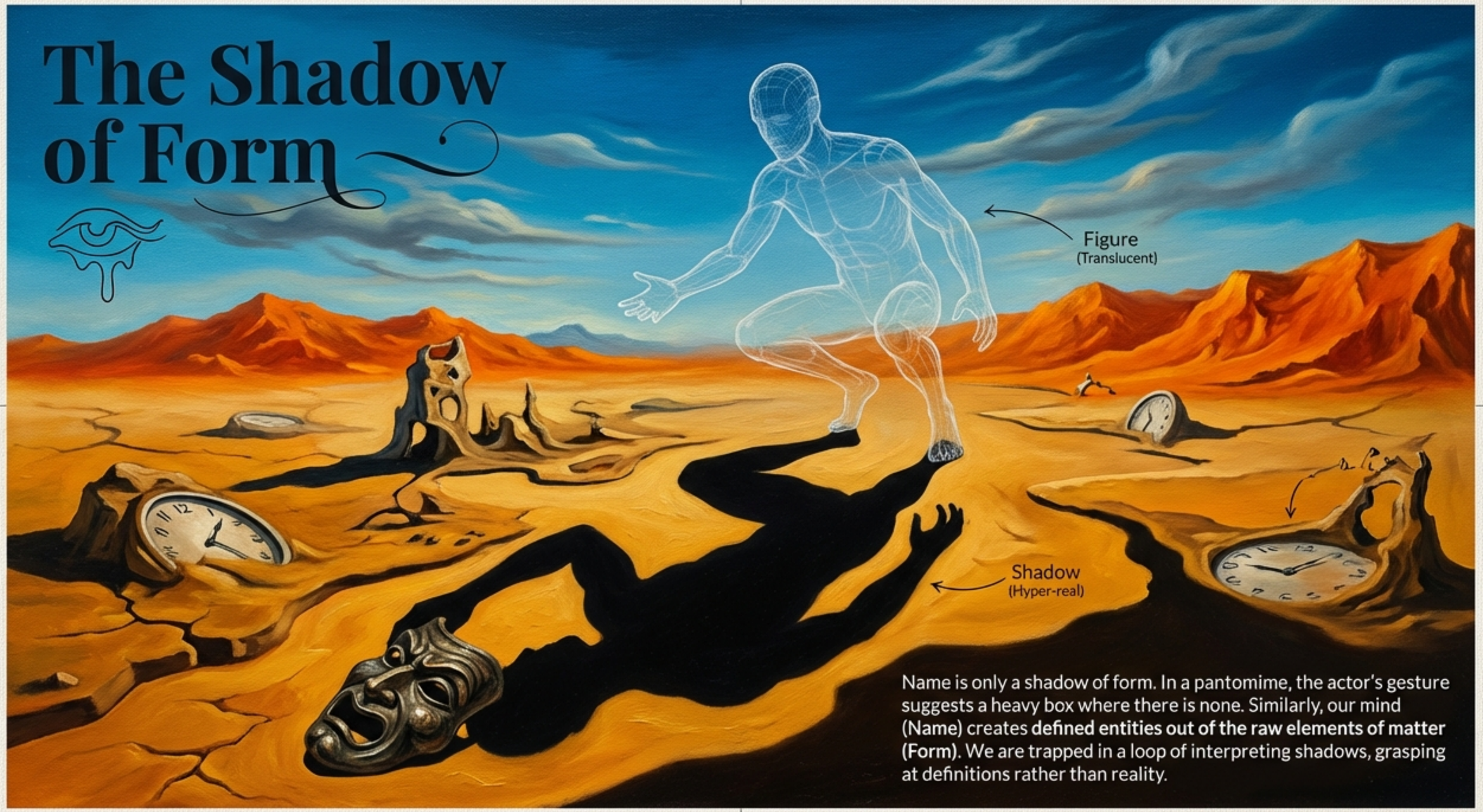
The Shadow of Form



Name is only a shadow of form. In a pantomime, the actor's gesture suggests a heavy box where there is none. Similarly, our mind (Name) creates **defined entities out of the raw elements of matter (Form)**. We are trapped in a loop of interpreting shadows, grasping at definitions rather than reality.

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Existence Through Relativity
The Buddha's Insight:
"When there are hands, taking up and putting down is apparent."
"When there are feet, going forward and coming back is apparent."
The Reverse Truth:
When there is no "picking up," the hand ceases to be a hand. The entity exists only in relation to its function.
Name and Form are mutually dependent, and in that dependency, both are empty.

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The Rubbish Heap & The Gem

The Parable:
A man sees a rubbish heap as a single unit until he spots a gem inside. Suddenly, the heap is forgotten; desire narrows his focus to the gem.

The Reality:
The gem is part of the rubbish. We create 'value' out of the meaningless debris of samsara through Desire and Attention.

Q: What is the root of all things?
A: All things are rooted in Desire (*Chanda*).

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The Anatomy of Experience

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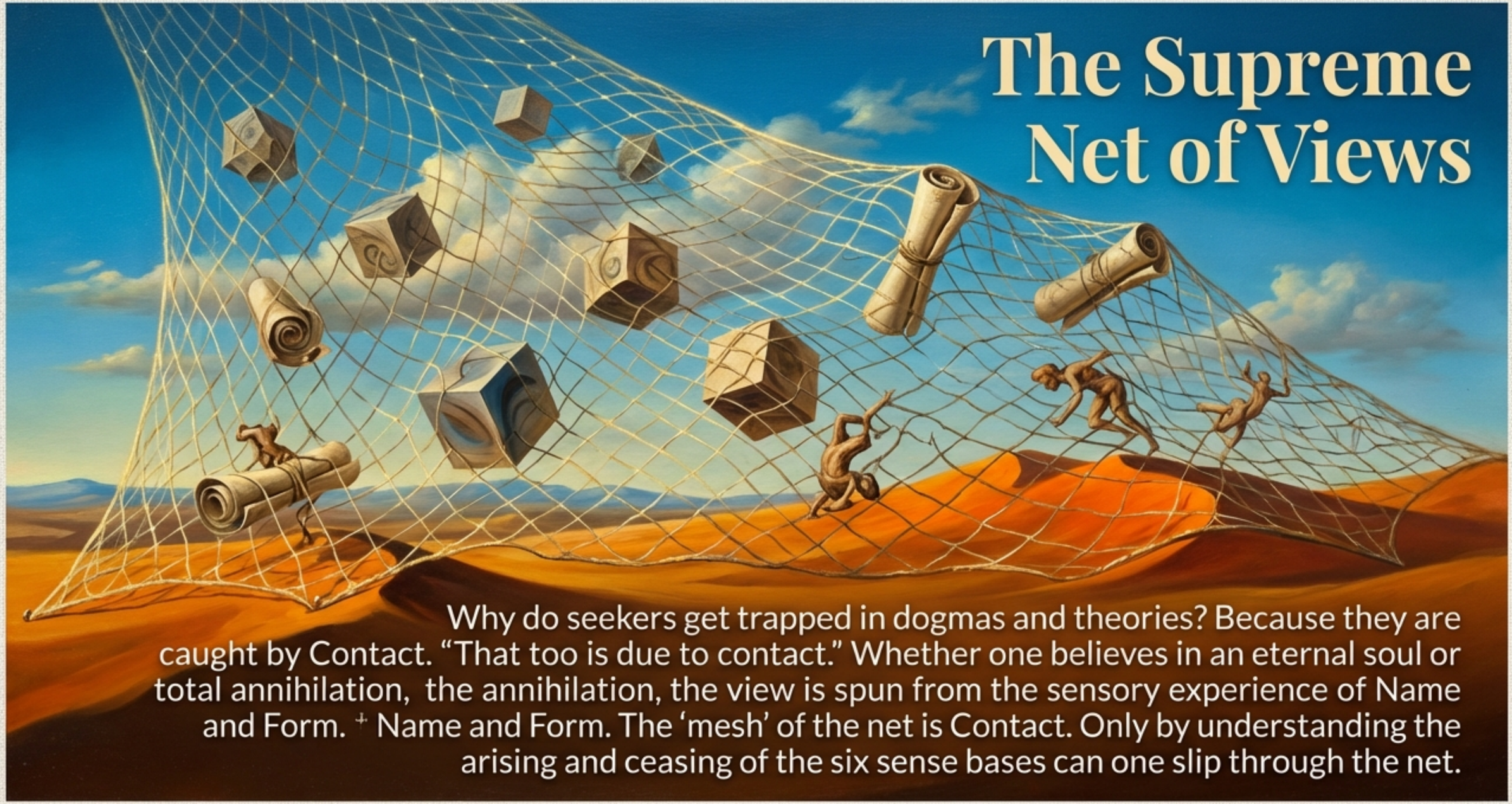
The Supreme Net of Views
Why do seekers get trapped in dogmas and theories? Because they are caught by Contact. “That too is due to contact.” Whether one believes in an eternal soul or total annihilation, the annihilation, the view is spun from the sensory experience of Name and Form. + Name and Form. The ‘mesh’ of the net is Contact. Only by understanding the arising and ceasing of the six sense bases can one slip through the net.

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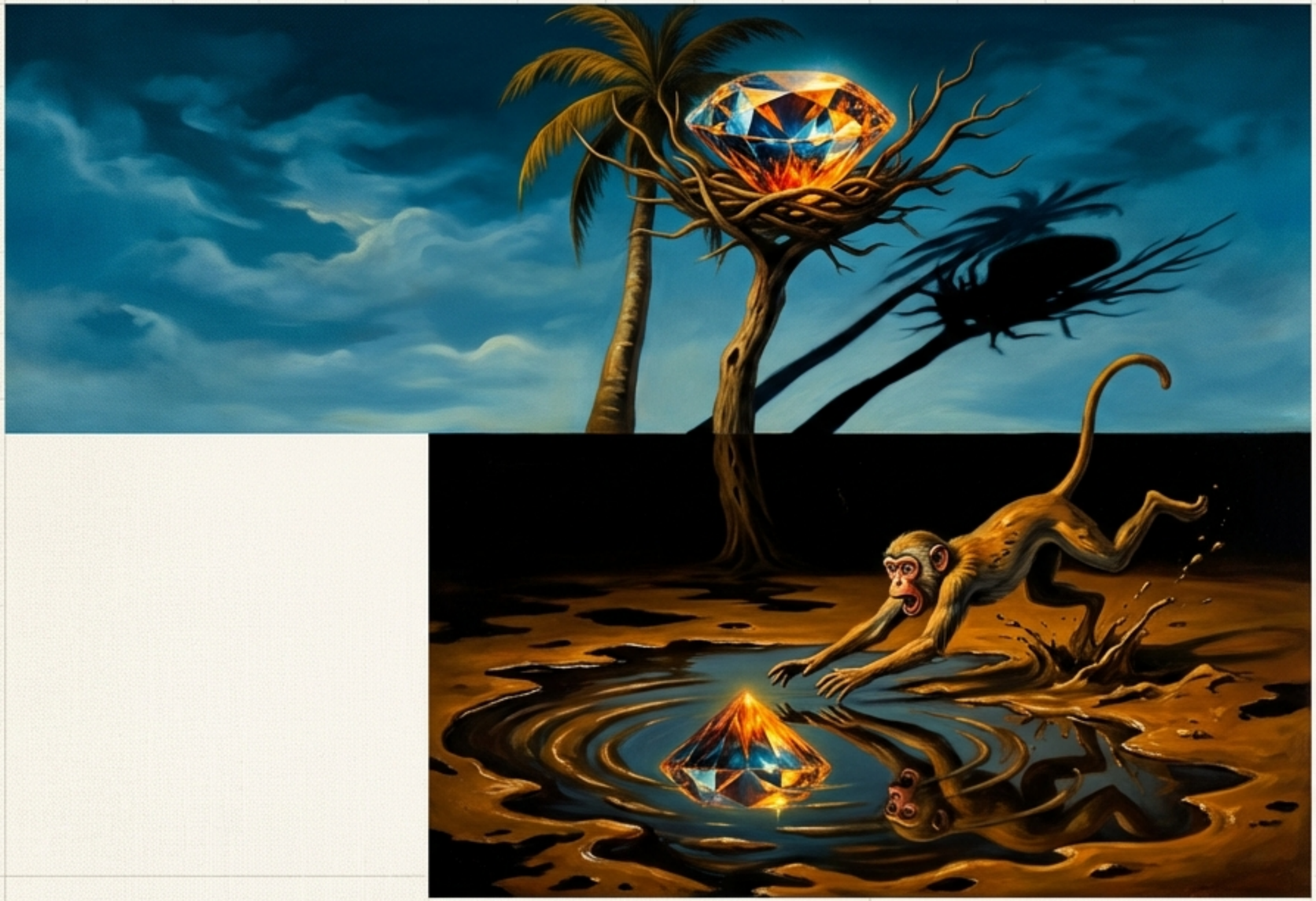
Chasing the Reflection



Consciousness is a reflecting surface. It shows us an image of Name and Form.

The Mistake: We dive into the pond (materiality), trying to possess the reflection. We treat the image as the reality.

The Wisdom: The Bodhisatta looks up. The true gem is not in the water. We must realize that what we see in the mind is merely a reflection.

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The Cinema of Shadows

Our lives are a ‘Cinema of Shadows.’ We are mesmerized by the movie projected by our own desires.
Wisdom is not analyzing the movie; wisdom is opening the doors.
When the ‘Luster of Wisdom’ enters, the beam of the projector fades. The
The drama cannot sustain itself in the light of reality.

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The Antidote of Impermanence

The ‘Pantomime’ relies on the illusion of stability. The perception of Impermanence (Anicca) is the weapon against the drama. When we see that the stage, the actors, and the script are constantly perishing, the ‘sign’ of permanence dissolves. “With the dispelling of the perception of permanence, the tendency to grasp a sign is removed.”

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The Miracle of the Dhamma

Radical Attention (Yoniso Manasikara): You do not need to wait for a rainbow; the entire spectrum exists in a single dew drop if the angle is right. A shift in perspective turns any object into a meditation. Even a ‘pernicious’ object can trigger enlightenment if one sees through it to the underlying nature of impermanence and voidness.

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The Essence is Deliverance

Q: What is the essence of this "Rubbish Heap" of existence?
A: Deliverance (Vimutti).

The essence is not a soul or a core substance. **The essence of the gem is the transcendence of the gem. To find the core of the Dhamma is to be released from the very concepts that construct it.**

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Signless Deliverance

Voidness (Suññata): ‘This is empty of self or anything belonging to a self.’ The drama ends not with a bang, but with the fading of the actor. The ‘I Am’ conceit is uprooted. When the perception of Impermanence is fully developed, it leads to the Signless Deliverance. The stage is empty. The audience has left.

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The Stilling of Preparations

‘This is peaceful, this is excellent.’ The cessation of the pantomime. The relinquishment of all assets. The destruction of craving. Nibbana is not a place one goes to; it is the cooling of the fever, the end of the film, the silence after the show.
The
Deathless.

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